

Minutes

Sarasota Agriculture Policy Council

November 18, 2008

A meeting of the Sarasota County Agriculture Policy Council (SAPC) was held on November 18, 2008 at the Sarasota County Extension Office, 6700 Clark Road, Sarasota. The meeting was called to order at 9:10 am.

In attendance

Gale Barton, Mitch Blumenthal, Tim Brown, Jennifer Brunty, Cynthia Calisch, Anna Churchill, Jack Creighton, Eric Ernst, Bruce Fehr, Hugh Henkel, Juan Huerta, Kate Irwin, Jodi John, Preston Laurus, John Matthews, Laura Morton, Andy Neuhofer, Andrew Nouné, Tanya Nguyen-Do, P.B. Peyser, Nina Powers, Betsy Roberts, Steve Suau, Nan Summers.

Approval of Minutes

There were no minutes to approve because this is the first meeting of SAPC for its new activities in developing recommendations for the implementation of the 2006 agriculture policies in the Comprehensive Plan of Sarasota County.

Introduction of Members and Attendees

Attendees introduced themselves and were asked to identify their role in the local food system of Sarasota County.

New Business

Review of adopted 2006 agricultural policies of the Comprehensive Plan of Sarasota County
(Robert Kluson, Sarasota County Extension)

Robert reported to the SAPC on the history and purpose of this group. He summarized the work completed in 2005-06 that culminated in the new agriculture policies adopted by the Board of County Commissioners (BCC). He explained that at the end of that process, the BCC requested that the SAPC continue its role as an unofficial advisory body and now focus on recommendations for the implementation of these agriculture policies. Handouts were distributed of these agriculture policies, a glossary of terms, and a fact sheet on the definition of sustainable agriculture. These handouts provided background information on the concepts and text of these agricultural policies. Robert then explained the process of these implementation meetings of SAPC which will be advertised so as to again include a diverse representation of community leaders of the local food system of Sarasota County;

- First, there will be a series of meetings to “brain storm” proposals for implementation projects that will be identified to specific policies.
- Second, there will be a series of meetings for consensus-building on the top proposals.
- Third, committees will be formed to complete necessary text and information, in conjunction with county staff, for formal presentation of proposals to the BCC.
- Upon completion, the process will be repeated, as appropriate.

Overview of the FGBC Green Local Government Certification of Sarasota County and its role for 2006 agriculture policy implementation (Nina Powers, Office of Sustainability, Sarasota County)

Nina reported for the scheduled presenter Lee Hayes Byron who was ill and her report is supplemented in these minutes with PowerPoint data received from Lee Hayes afterwards. The FL Green Building Coalition (FGBC)’s Green Local Government Certification is a state-wide certification of local government sustainability practices. Sustainability is at the center of government operations for Sarasota County which was certified at the Gold Level on October 7, 2008 based on categories in Energy & Air, Water, Waste, Health, Land Use, and Community Awareness. Continuation of this certification requires expanded credits earned from new sustainability initiatives, such as implementation of sustainable agriculture practices. Such initiatives will reduce the food-based ecological footprint of Sarasota County. Specific agriculture credit examples include

- Promotion of organic farming with incentives to maintain/create organic farms within city/county, or
- Incorporate sustainable and water efficient agriculture (1 point per incentive/ 5 points max).
- Example incentives include lower tax base for certified organic farms; assistance with organic certification fees; low interest loans for retrofit; and promotion and Marketing assistance.

Additional agriculture credit examples include:

- Offer promotion and education of water conservation within the agriculture sector (1 point achieved)
- Offer education on principles and applications of organic farming, permaculture, and sustainable agriculture (1 point achieved)
- Example incentives include develop, distribute and market educational material on green agriculture issues (e.g., courses, seminars, websites, printed materials, etc); mobile irrigation labs (e.g., combine education with technical assistance incentive); and extension outreach.

The SAPC can contribute to the county's efforts in FGBC Green Local Government certification by developing recommendations for the implementation of the new agriculture policies, such as policy 1.3.3 of the Future Land Use Chapter.

County level policy implementation example: Local Organic Food as Economic Development in Woodbury, IA

This DVD was presented and is available for loan from Robert Kluson, upon request. One can also view online a shorter version of the DVD at http://web.mac.com/marqusee/Woodbury_Organics/Main.html

Discussion of 2006 agriculture policy-needs of community projects in sustainable food system development in Sarasota County

Proposals for specific implementation projects were suggested by the attendees and recorded (see attachment for list). Each proposal was also identified as to the specific agriculture policy that it would implement.

Next Meeting

The next meeting was scheduled for January 13, 2009 at the Sarasota County Extension Office, 6700 Clark Road, Sarasota, FL from 9:00am-12:00pm.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 11:50 am.